



# SEAPORT

NORTH CENTRAL IDAHO: CLEARWATER, IDAHO, LATAH, LEWIS, & NEZ PERCE COUNTIES

## EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Seaport's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased in May to 4.6 percent from April's rate of 5.1 percent, as shown in Seaport Table 1. In May 2002, the rate was 4.7 percent. May's *Nonfarm Payroll Jobs* increased only 80 jobs from April 2003, but decreased 950 from May 2002. Most of the increase since April was in *Construction*—8.3 percent—which can be attributed to road-work and industrial construction crews. In both *Leisure and Hospitality* and *Trade* sectors, employment increased from April 2003, but both are lagging behind last year's levels.

## AREA DEVELOPMENTS

### Idaho & Lewis Counties

- Syringa General Hospital in Grangeville broke ground in June on a \$240,000 ambulance shed and community meeting room. The building will be 3,600-square feet, including a 1,000-square-foot classroom/meeting room that will be equipped for teleconferences. The ambulance shed and community meeting room will be located across the street from the main hospital building on the site of the former Crossroads Restaurant and Motel. Only part of the block will be used for the new building. A new steakhouse will occupy the remaining space. Becky Mager and her father, Ernie Robinson, both of White Bird, are building the restaurant and owned the entire property, but sold a 100-by-100-foot section to the hospital for less-than-market value.

### Latah County

- Crews have demolished the Gritman Medical Center engineering building on the south side of Eighth Street between Main and Washington Streets in Moscow. The demolition is one of the steps needed to prepare the site for an expansion of the hospital, which is scheduled to break ground July 23. Plans call for a 48,000-square-foot, \$19 million addition. Eighth Street between Main

Seaport Table 1: Labor Force & Employment  
Nez Perce County, Idaho and Asotin County, Washington

|  | May<br>2003* | April<br>2003 | May<br>2002 | % Change From |              |
|--|--------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
|  |              |               |             | Last<br>Month | Last<br>Year |
| <b>INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE</b> |              |               |             |               |              |
| <b>Seasonally Adjusted</b>               |              |               |             |               |              |
| Civilian Labor Force                     | 36,190       | 36,590        | 35,190      | -1.1          | 2.8          |
| Unemployment                             | 1,670        | 1,860         | 1,670       | -10.2         | 0.0          |
| % of Labor Force Unemployed              | 4.6          | 5.1           | 4.7         |               |              |
| Total Employment                         | 34,520       | 34,730        | 33,520      | -0.6          | 3.0          |
| <b>Unadjusted</b>                        |              |               |             |               |              |
| Civilian Labor Force                     | 36,130       | 36,580        | 35,260      | -1.2          | 2.5          |
| Unemployment                             | 1,480        | 1,850         | 1,550       | -20.0         | -4.5         |
| % of Labor Force Unemployed              | 4.1          | 5.1           | 4.4         |               |              |
| Total Employment                         | 34,650       | 34,730        | 33,710      | -0.2          | 2.8          |
| <b>JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK</b>             |              |               |             |               |              |
| <b>Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS</b>    | 26,780       | 26,700        | 27,730      | 0.3           | -3.4         |
| <b>Goods-Producing Industries</b>        | 4,370        | 4,300         | 4,640       | 1.6           | -5.8         |
| Natural Resources & Mining               | 200          | 190           | 180         | 5.3           | 11.1         |
| Construction                             | 1,040        | 960           | 1,270       | 8.3           | -18.1        |
| Manufacturing                            | 3,130        | 3,150         | 3,190       | -0.6          | -1.9         |
| Wood Product Manufacturing               | 530          | 540           | 570         | -1.9          | -7.0         |
| Food Manufacturing                       | 90           | 90            | 80          | 0.0           | 12.5         |
| Paper Manufacturing                      | 1,210        | 1,210         | 1,200       | 0.0           | 0.8          |
| Other Manufacturing                      | 1,300        | 1,310         | 1,340       | -0.8          | -3.0         |
| <b>Service-Providing Industries</b>      | 22,410       | 22,400        | 23,080      | 0.0           | -2.9         |
| Trade, Transportation & Utilities        | 6,070        | 6,030         | 6,090       | 0.7           | -0.3         |
| Wholesale Trade                          | 640          | 620           | 630         | 3.2           | 1.6          |
| Retail Trade                             | 4,100        | 4,090         | 4,120       | 0.2           | -0.5         |
| Utilities                                | 90           | 90            | 90          | 0.0           | 0.0          |
| Transportation & Warehousing             | 1,240        | 1,230         | 1,250       | 0.8           | -0.8         |
| Information                              | 370          | 360           | 380         | 2.8           | -2.6         |
| Financial Activities                     | 1,850        | 1,830         | 1,810       | 1.1           | 2.2          |
| Professional & Business Services         | 1,470        | 1,520         | 1,530       | -3.3          | -3.9         |
| Education & Health Services              | 3,800        | 3,830         | 4,040       | -0.8          | -5.9         |
| Leisure & Hospitality                    | 2,640        | 2,590         | 2,750       | 1.9           | -4.0         |
| Other Services                           | 1,180        | 1,180         | 1,200       | 0.0           | -1.7         |
| Government Education                     | 2,250        | 2,320         | 2,520       | -3.0          | -10.7        |
| Government Administration                | 1,910        | 1,870         | 1,880       | 2.1           | 1.6          |
| Government Tribes                        | 870          | 870           | 880         | 0.0           | -1.1         |

\*Preliminary Estimate

\*\*Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

and Washington was permanently closed in June to make room for the two-story addition. A narrow corridor will connect the old building with the new. One of the highlights of the new first floor will be a women's center that includes a birthing center, ultrasound, mammography, and gynecology rooms. Outpatient services also will be on the first floor. The second floor will feature an enlarged inpatient department with private rooms. A rooftop helipad will be constructed, giving the hospital an improved link for emergencies and patient transfers. Improvements in the old hospital also will be made, operating rooms will be upgraded, and other areas will be renovated to dovetail with the new addition.

- New medical facilities seem to be cropping up like wheat on the Palouse. The neighboring city of Pullman, Wash., broke ground in May

on a new hospital. In addition, construction will begin this summer in Moscow on the new Palouse Surgery Center on property north of Wal-Mart on Warbonnet Drive. The surgery center, a joint venture between Gritman and 17 local physicians, is designed to offer same-day surgical procedures. The center is patterned after nearly 3,500 similar centers throughout the United States and is scheduled to open in early 2004. Outpatient surgery and care is one of the fastest growing trends in medicine. Patients will arrive at the surgery center on the day of their procedures, have surgery in an operating room, and recover all in one day without the more costly hospital admission associated with overnight or longer-term stays.

#### **Nez Perce County & Asotin Counties**

- One might think that in a sagging economy plans to buy a fishing boat might be one of the first cuts families would make to control their budgets. Judging by what's happening with north central Idaho and southeastern Washington welded aluminum boat manufacturers, however, that isn't the case. Five of the eight manufacturers in this area have backlogs of customers who want to purchase boats. Since 2000, the number of people employed in boat manufacturing in the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley has climbed by 41 to 211. Although those jobs represent just 6.5 percent of all manufacturing jobs, they're important because boat making is one of the few sectors of manufacturing that's growing. Many of those working for boat manufacturers are welders, a trade with average wages of \$13.50 per hour in this area.
- Lewis-Clark State College (LCSC) will finally break ground in August on its new multipurpose activity center. The \$16.4 million center has been in limbo since January 2002. In early May, the Legislature approved the issuance of bonds to help finance construction of state-approved projects, such as the multipurpose activity center and the University of Idaho Teaching and Learning Center. A Spokane contractor provided a bid in January 2002 to build the activity center for \$1.2 million less than the estimated construction cost of \$13 million. That contractor, Leone Keeble, Inc., indicated the project could still be completed for that price. LCSC has waited years for the center, which will be built to replace the 1930s-era Warrior Gym. Fund-raising for the 100,000-square-foot center began more than five years ago. The college began a local fund-raising campaign that raised about \$1.5 million from local supporters. Students committed to pay additional fees to raise \$2 million for the project.
- Potlatch Corp., the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley's largest private employer, is transferring 12 of 2,000 jobs in Lewiston to the Midwest. The transfers are a part of a decision by Potlatch to open a new site in the

Midwest where tissue will be cut into household towels. The number of converting lines in Lewiston will drop by one to 20 in January when the change is completed, according to a statement from Potlatch. Many of Potlatch's customers, such as Safeway, Albertsons, and Kroger, have expanded into the Midwest and Northeast. They've requested Potlatch provide them with house brand tissue for those areas. Potlatch has also landed new customers in those geographic regions. Those markets will likely grow more quickly than in the West because Potlatch already has acquired 90 percent of the accounts for drug and grocery stores in the West. Much of the tissue needed for the Midwest and Northeast markets is made in Lewiston, but transporting finished products is more expensive than transporting the parent rolls of tissue that are fed into the machines. The parent rolls are about 7-feet in diameter and 8 ½-feet wide, weighing 4,500 pounds. One truck is needed to move a parent roll across the country while several would be needed to transport the finished products that could be made from it. It has not been established exactly where the new converting site will be or how many people it will employ at this time.

- Regence BlueShield of Idaho is cutting 35 claims processing and customer service jobs in Lewiston. These are jobs that were created in the last two years to help with a transition to a new computer system, said Georganne Benjamin, spokeswoman for Regence BlueShield of Idaho. Regence hired more people to cover for workers who were being trained on the new system, and processed claims on the old system to prevent a backlog, Benjamin said. Regence hired these additional employees to help with the change in Idaho, and then planned to transfer them to assist Regence affiliates in Washington, Oregon, and Utah. Changes in the economy and other industry pressures led to a change in the plans, resulting in the layoff, Benjamin said. In addition to the 35 eliminated positions, another 65 jobs are affected in some way. In recent months, another 20 jobs have not been filled as people left or those who held them were reassigned in-house, according to Benjamin. Regence, a not-for-profit medical insurance provider, is one of the largest employers in the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley.

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